

Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of

Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's  
Amateur Radio Service Rules to eliminate  
Morse code proficiency testing requirements  
for all classes of amateur licenses

| RM-10783  
| RM-10784  
| RM-10785  
| RM-10786  
| RM-10787  
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**COMMENTS OF**  
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Commissioners:

I'm commenting on the petitions before you that seek to remove the Morse code testing requirements in Part 97. My position is that, in accordance to the ITU ruling, Element 1 should be removed from the syllabus. I do not recommend nor suggest any further restructuring of the license classes, nor any bandplan changes. I agree with Stevenson on the need of the Commission to act expeditiously on this without combining or conflating it with other matters. I shall comment on five of the seven petitions, RM-10783 through RM-10787.

RM 10784, Reich:

Reich advocates removing the Morse requirement from the General exam and advocates keeping the code requirement for the Extra exam, due to the widespread perception among hams that Extra-class licensees are "better" and "more cooperative" operators.

I'm an Extra, and I hold a General Radiotelephone Operator's License with Radar Endorsement as well, and I can't see myself being that good! Indeed, there are Extras I can't stand and Techs among my best friends (and best ops!). Since the Commission believes, as I do, that the Morse test only tests competence in the receiving of Morse and only that, this should be a non-starter and I do not support retaining Element 1 for Extra.

RM-10783, Holliday, RM-10785, Ward and RM-10786, Stevenson, NCI:

I completely agree with Stevenson on the case for eliminating the Morse requirement and on the need for it. In my area, we need more radio operators who are trained for weather spotting (SKYWARN) and for civil emergencies such that have been experienced recently on the East Coast. I've never heard of Morse being used for tactical communications during emergencies; also, Morse proficiency does *not* necessarily indicate proficiency in emergency communications, an area that requires much adaptability, preparation, patience and cooperation as seen at Ground Zero following September 11th. Many long-time hams fail to prepare for emergencies, becoming complacent in their knowledge and often proclaiming their better character for knowing Morse. When things get worse, these are often the same people who aren't around, or who get in the way at a disaster site, making us all look bad.

I've worked with many "codeless" hams (those that have attained the Technician license) in public-service events (the Boston Marathon and the Walk For Hunger) and I've found them to be quite professional with the right training. I'm proud to have helped one newer ham through his first Marathon, and he was a fine operator.

In light of our importance to Homeland Security, the Commission might someday advocate public service and emergency training, such as offered by the ARRL, to all hams. It might actually get some Morse-coded hams off their laurels where they might do some good.

RM-10787, Maia, National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC):

Maia touches on a point I made in my comments to 98-143 (the 1999 restructuring). I'm a person with multiple disabilities, as are many friends in my circle. In 1999, some commentors were advocating a kind of means-test on disabled applicants to see if they were "really disabled" and unable to take the code test.

At the time, this put physicians in a bind: very few, if any, of them, could determine if an applicant had disabilities that kept him or her from learning the code, nor could they suggest any adaptive measures for the test. The ARRL's position at the time as printed on the Form 605 license application was that applicants should try, and fail, the test at least once to determine if a waiver was justified. Some commentors in 98-143 even suggested the VEC's should review an applicant's medical records! The word nightmare—for both the examinees, the VE's, and the Commission—does not even begin to describe such a scenario.

I'm aware that the Commission, due to ITU S25.5, discontinued handicapped waivers in the 1999 restructuring. Since the WRC 2003 amendments, there should be no reason that a waiver should ever be denied. Indeed, Maia and Stevenson, et al., have well demonstrated there should be no such Morse test requirements at all.

This doesn't mean that people with disabilities cannot or should not enjoy Morse. I personally do not, but Handi-Hams, the Minnesota organization that teaches ham radio to disabled hams, continues to hold Morse classes. This is as it should be; people in those classes can have fun without the stress of passing an exam element that is practically irrelevant and examiners can concentrate on more important things.

As a volunteer examiner myself, I would rather we focused on the *written* exams, making them accessible for **all** examinees with disabilities and continuing to make them relevant to our ever-changing needs and requirements for prospective hams.

The Morse exam no longer furthers the purpose of the amateur service. It has even kept amateur radio from recruiting—and retaining—radio operators who can function in emergency situations where Morse has not been required for years. Commissioner Powell desires to remove unnecessary and superfluous regulations; many countries have already eliminated the test.

Therefore, I advocate that Element 1, the 5 WPM test, should no longer be a requirement for any amateur radio license and that it be removed from the testing syllabus immediately.

Respectfully submitted,

David Moisan